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## Bob Filner meets vets to discuss G.I. Bill

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Congressman Bob Filner was once a Freedom Rider fighting for Civil Rights for African-Americans in the Deep South. Today he is fighting for the rights of American veterans during a deep recession.

Filner was on campus to meet with student veterans, to announce a \$100,000 grant for veteran programs and to check on the program of his efforts to repair glitches in programs that have frustrated many vets.



**Filner**

Southern San Diego County, Imperial County and the California/Mexico border are known as the 51<sup>st</sup> district in California and are represented in congress by Filner.

He has demonstrated interest in politics since 1964. Filner was once arrested and jailed in Mississippi as a Freedom Rider activist. Contrary to the methods incorporated into his office, Filner's father, Joseph, was both a leader of the Communist Party USA and a World War II veteran.

Southwestern College was awarded \$100,000 from the American Council on Education last summer to boost academic success by veterans. Filner said the federal government and many California colleges are gearing for a large influx of vets returning to college as conflicts in the Middle East dies.

"My first task is getting enough money into the system," said Filner. "Then I have to oversee how that money is being used. Of course the total notion of the G.I. Bill on education is key. Those are our priorities."

Though veterans and their advocates have stressed overwhelming praise of the post 9/11 G.I. Bill and its generous benefits, many SWC vets complained last fall of slow payouts, unresponsive V.A. representatives and other issues that hindered staying in school.

World War II veteran Anthony A. LoBue, also known as Tony the Vet said Filner is making progress for Vets and has been a good listener.

"I felt that the meeting with Congressman Filner was useful to the veterans who attended, they could put a face on the politician," said LoBue. "I felt that this was a town hall meeting, a fireside chat, a way for people to meet one-on-one, face-to-face. If they have

a complaint to vent, they can be aware that the other person is listening with genuine concern. (Filner) seemed to be honest, open, uninhibited, genuinely surprised by some of the glitches in the laws that were passed with good intentions. His assistant Lee Hernandez was standing by writing notes on everything."

Attendees continued to raise their issues and concerns regarding Veteran Affairs and Filner proposed the audience engage in a future teleconference. The teleconference will bring these issues to the attention of Filner.

"We're in the age of intergalactic technology and I'm confident that he's going to follow up on everything and he set time tables for some of these things," said LoBue.

Not all attendees said they were fully confident of Filner's ability to address their concerns.

"Honestly, I felt like it was another demonstration of a politician telling everybody how good he was," said Afghanistan and Iraqi war veteran and SWC student Adam Kelley. "I don't really expect there to be much action towards the betterment of the programs, the students or the overall educational experience. On the whole I felt it was just another politician being a politician\*. There was nothing mentioned here that I am unaware of. Now that this forum happened, my complaint has become aired more toward more than just the Veterans Affairs department and now they're forced to deal with it."

Filner acknowledged the frustrations many veterans felt and said red tape and delays were "unacceptable." This fight, he said, is far from over.